

HFMA
AWARDS 2018



**Case studies from the finance
team of the year award 2017**

Introduction

The National Healthcare Finance Awards attract entries from across the NHS, showcasing good practice and demonstrating ways of working that have proved particularly effective. The Finance Team of the Year award seeks excellence across a number of areas and attracts high quality submissions. This briefing looks at the shortlisted entries of the 2017 Finance Team of the Year award and summarises the good practice demonstrated by NHS finance teams.

Driving system efficiencies

As the health and care system moves towards an ever more integrated approach, the finance team plays an important role in ensuring that system efficiencies are maximised. This section includes two case studies that have contributed to improved system efficiencies, through working at a service line level.

NHS Wigan Borough CCG

The CCG was aware that exploiting the opportunities for ambulatory care could improve patient care and reduce the pressure on the acute system. However, identifying the people who could benefit from this approach was not straightforward due to the number of different data sources in use. The performance and business intelligence team developed a single dataset to capture this information, addressing the common problem of counting patients more than once.

Being able to identify patients meant that appropriate interventions could be put in place to reduce admissions and, if presenting to hospital as an emergency, could be streamed to ambulatory emergency care.

However, working in this way required the acute trust to work in a different way regarding service provision. While better for the patients, this approach meant a potential loss of income for the organisation. The CCG devised a short-term tariff to support the transition to a reduced outpatient rate but accepted that this was not a workable solution due to the requirements to manage and monitor the system, subsequently reverting back to treating it as a non-elective admission. When developing new ways of working, it is important to realise quickly when things do not work as expected and make the necessary changes. The CCG worked with the acute provider to develop an incentivised contract approach which better enabled the acute provider to seek transformational change to delivery of services.

An effective ambulatory care system requires more services to be available in the community. The CCG therefore also worked with community providers via an integrated community services approach to develop services that supported the identified patients. The result of this work is a reduction in non-elective admissions, enabled by an innovative approach to using data to identify patients who could benefit.

NHS St Helens CCG

For many CCGs, demand for NHS continuing healthcare (CHC) has grown far beyond the available budget, creating an unaffordable pressure. The St Helens CHC team is a joint team between the CCG and local authority. A member of the NHS finance team undertook a review of CHC processes

across both organisations to understand if systems were not working and, if so, where improvements could be made.

The review process required a detailed understanding of the whole service, not just the financial arrangements. The finance manager involved was supported to spend the necessary time to work alongside operational staff, including nurses and social workers, to fully understand the processes undertaken. This led to significant changes to the way the CHC function worked and it is now contributing towards organisational cost savings.

The benefits of this review were wider than just financial savings. The two organisations now work in a more integrated way, reducing boundary issues for both staff and the patient. Staff morale has improved and sickness levels in the service have dropped.

The impact of this review was so beneficial for all concerned, that the CCG is now taking this approach to other areas of the business.

Supporting system transformation

Being able to look beyond the boundaries of the finance team has always been important for the success of the function. However, as organisations consolidate and a more holistic view is taken of the health and care system, the need to work across both different functional areas and different organisations is more important than ever before.

Manchester Health & Care Commissioning and Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust

Manchester Health and Care Commissioning is a partnership between Manchester City Council and Manchester CCG to create a single commissioning function for the city. The finance teams had to come together and work through how they needed to change and the barriers that needed to be overcome. The financial change required was underpinned by a roadmap which set out how each aspect would develop over the next three years, and the assumptions made at each point. For example, it recognised that the financial reporting timescales would take a couple of years to align but that regulation was unlikely to allow a change in the scheme of delegation over the roadmap period through to 2020.

The partnership recognises that this roadmap is crucial to the success of the combined body but that the culture and relationships developed are the enabler to its success. The combined finance function is considered to be just one team, removing the organisational boundaries between local authority and NHS staff.

The work in Manchester Health and Care Commissioning demonstrates how teams can integrate despite differing responsibilities and requirements upon them. The wider system was also going through change with the formation of Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS FT and the development of the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership.

Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS FT was formed through an acquisition, bringing two mental health finance teams together as part of the larger organisation. Again, joint working was required to understand where processes could be aligned or needed to change. However, considerable effort was put into integrating the two teams, including a buddy system so that there was a point of contact for each person in the other team. This being a merging of two teams into one body, the ledger systems had to be combined and budget holders needed to be trained in the new approach. In addition, new board reporting packs were required.

The organisation recognised the pressure and stress that staff were under during the acquisition process, particularly as the department was restructured to realise the business case savings for the acquisition. Key to mitigating the stress was communication; ensuring staff received regular and honest updates about progress.

The acquisition to form Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS FT was finalised in January 2017. Manchester Health and Care Commissioning came into being in April 2017. Both reorganisations were being undertaken at a time when the support of the other was required. It is notable that feedback cites the finance teams in both cases as remaining approachable, responsive and considerate of the wider health and care agenda.

Adapting to the organisation's needs

Finance teams need to understand the organisation they work in to deliver support in the most appropriate way and allow the organisation to flourish. In many cases the development of a good relationship between the clinical and financial functions can be key to both areas working to their full ability and strengths.

Mersey Care NHS FT

Working as finance business partners to the organisation enabled the finance team to support the clinical divisions in service redesign and transformation. This both improved patient care and released costs of £12.7m over two years. The work was led by clinicians and this ensured that the right changes were made and that they were supported by the business; cultural change is essential in enabling service changes both to stick and to be effective.

Mersey Care NHS FT used the CIP targets to focus attention on the most inefficient service areas, phasing them over five years to build up a surplus in the early stages. This enabled the trust to support wider ambitions for the organisation. Adapting the cost improvement programme to highlight areas of concern meant that it could have the most impact.

The finance team has implemented a new service model which is more responsive to the needs of the organisation. The team has also worked on clinical engagement, enabled because of the time that had been released through the improvement of transactional processes. The relationships that have been built have ensured that accurate and timely information has been available as service transformation has been undertaken.

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust

In July 2016 the trust was one of the first acute trusts to be placed into financial special measures. This meant that the demands on the finance team were considerable, including the development of a financial recovery plan for the organisation. In order to do this, the team worked closely with divisions to identify opportunities to make efficiency savings. These savings did not stop at clinical services and the finance function itself had to look at its own processes.

This review led to the introduction of working day one reporting which made finance information available much earlier to the organisation and allowed action to be taken sooner. By taking this proactive approach, the perception of the finance team was improved and enabled new relationships to be built within the trust.

The improved perception of the function, to one that worked alongside services rather than in the background, meant that clinical engagement became easier and a deep dive approach was

developed to look at specialties in greater detail, to understand the implications of service changes for both them and the wider organisation. This has improved the financial sustainability of the services and, through using this in conjunction with the Model Hospital, has allowed changes to be made. The clear financial benefits have been backed up by improvements to patient experience and operational processes.

Communicating financial information well

The NHS is facing considerable financial challenges. Addressing these challenges requires the support of staff, patients and the wider population, but to achieve this, people need to understand the implications of the choices that they make and the impact on the health and care system. The ability to communicate financial information clearly and well, allows finance teams the opportunity to have a constructive debate with those who are impacted by decisions being made.

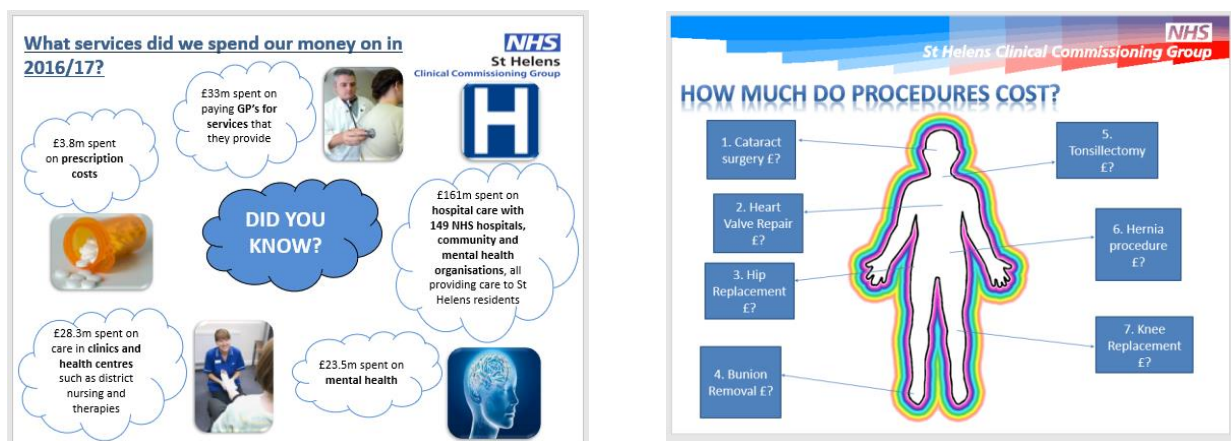
NHS St Helens CCG

St Helens CCG approached their 2016/17 financial communication strategy in three ways, varying it for the different audiences.

- Stakeholders

For those attending the CCG’s annual general meeting (AGM), and other interested Twitter users, the finance team developed a series of information slides which were shared on Twitter over the five days preceding the AGM. These gave a visual representation of some key financial facts and helped people to prepare questions for the AGM.

At the AGM itself, the finance team ran a ‘stall’ with interactive games and further details about the CCG’s finances, enabling people to find out more about the challenges faced and how the team worked.



Examples of a ‘Twitter teaser’ and interactive game

- Patients

It is not usual to speak to patients about financial matters. However, the finance team were involved in patient engagement events where they used their interactive quiz approach to ensure that the public understood the financial challenge and how activity was linked with cost.

- CCG board and finance committee
Key to the financial governance of the organisation is ensuring that the CCG board and finance committee fully understand the numbers and the risks surrounding them. The finance team developed an enhanced board report which gave detailed information to the finance committee about the cost improvement plans; progress, risks and mitigations. The governing body of the CCG is reliant on the finance team to provide accurate and timely information so it is good practice to regularly review what is being provided to ensure that it still fully meets the needs of the board and committee.

Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS FT

Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS FT also identified the need to explain the financial position of the trust in a more accessible way to stakeholders. In this case, the organisation chose to develop an animated film which went through each aspect of the results and explained the implications of it. Consideration was given to the differing requirements of the audience and the information was presented visually, spoken and had subtitles. The film was played at the AGM and was very well received.



Developing finance and non-finance staff

Undertaking a process of continual staff development and being aware of the changing needs of the finance team, is integral to a successful finance function. It is not surprising then that the theme of staff development came through strongly in all the submissions to the Finance Team of the Year awards. However, the developmental work carried out by finance teams is not confined to the function itself, with the profession providing training for staff elsewhere in the business and, in some cases, the people using their services. This section contains an overview of some of the activities described by the organisations involved.

Developing finance staff

Developing finance staff in the NHS is about much more than improving technical skills. The submissions to the Finance Team of the Year award showed a strong awareness of the importance for finance staff to understand the business and the perspectives of those using it. Organisations such as Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS FT and Wigan Borough CCG hold regular sessions where the finance team can hear from both clinicians and service users, focusing on different aspects

at each event. The importance of understanding carers' perspectives is also included on some finance team development agendas.

Understanding the clinical services that they support is essential to offer the correct financial support, and to ensure that the information provided is relevant and useful. At Mersey Care NHS FT, staff are offered the opportunity to spend time with the services and shadow clinicians in their work. All submissions highlighted the activities that their staff undertook with the services, indicating that this aspect of development is now considered business as usual.

Several organisations run regular departmental wide events where staff have an opportunity to contribute ideas to address problems at the trust and consider ways to improve working practices. At Wigan Borough CCG this is formalised as 'protected learning time', recognising the importance of hearing from everybody in the function.

Finance skills development for others

Beyond finance department boundaries, all entrants demonstrated a broad offer to the wider business. This encompassed regular training sessions for budget holders at Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS FT; accounts payable and procurement training at Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS FT; and coding roadshows at Alder Hey Children's NHS FT.

However, in some areas the developmental offer was somewhat broader. At Alder Hey Children's NHS FT, the finance function delivered training for their governors on not only how the money worked in the trust but how it works in the wider NHS. This enables their governors to have a better understanding of the business and ask the right questions of the function.

Wigan Borough CCG recognised a need to develop financial skills in general practice. They undertook listening events with general practice colleagues and provided tools to assist them in the areas required. They have also developed a wider financial training programme tailored to the specific needs of this area of health and care.

The work at St Helens CCG to deliver financial messages to wider stakeholders demonstrated the popularity of working with the public to get the information across in a different way. At Wigan Borough CCG, this approach has been expanded to delivering a financial awareness programme to patient groups, who want to better understand the organisation's budget and savings' programmes. This empowers the patients to contribute fully to co-produced service transformation work, as they do not feel excluded from some elements of the discussion.

At Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS FT, the finance team is also involved in delivering financial training to patients at their recovery academy. This approach recognises the skills that those working in finance have and utilises them to teach recovering patients basic life skills such as understanding bank statements and managing a household budget. Members of the team have also been accredited to deliver basic maths courses to apprentices in the trust.

Demonstrating good governance

The finance profession has strong governance at its core and all submissions to the Finance Team of the Year award are expected to show evidence of how good governance is maintained and the actions taken to continually improve it as the health and care system evolves. Examples across all organisations showed that governance continues to be a high priority with structures changing to manage new ways of working.

In Wigan, the CCG and Wrightington Wigan and Leigh NHS FT have implemented an incentivised contract which utilises joint working groups between the two bodies to monitor and assure it. Each organisation is represented on the other's finance and performance committee, ensuring that board members are able to raise questions with both organisations as necessary.

Nearby, the development of Manchester Health and Care Commissioning, a partnership between Manchester CCG and Manchester City Council has meant that the development of joint governance processes has been essential. All committees have representation from both parties, bringing in the increased scrutiny that comes from the involvement of lay members and those in elected public office. This has been supported by a 'due diligence' exercise across all budgets to understand the constraints within which each service works and governance requirements that they may be regulated by.

Governance issues in an acquisition come to the fore when merging two organisations' processes. At Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust these were combined to produce the leanest set of processes possible. As the two bodies combined, representatives from each of the legacy organisations sat on each committee to ensure that all issues were considered and resolved.

The wider view demonstrated in previous examples across different organisations can be replicated within a single trust to develop strong governance. At Alder Hey Children's NHS FT a multi-disciplinary approach is taken to investment decisions, with nursing, operational, information management and technology, human resources and finance staff all reviewing business cases to ensure that the anticipated benefits are realistic. This has been coupled with revised authorisation limits for purchasing to improve the governance around non-pay expenditure.

Conclusion

The key themes highlighted in this briefing were exhibited in each of the 2017 submissions to the National Finance Team of the Year award. As the health and care system evolves into more integrated approaches, the importance of both good governance across organisations and the need to train staff in a wider variety of disciplines is well demonstrated. Many organisations highlighted their work with patients to improve financial skills and understanding. This is an area that finance functions have traditionally stayed away from and it shows how the modern finance team has a much greater awareness of their impact.

Submissions for the 2018 awards are well underway and will no doubt continue to develop the themes discussed here and demonstrate the good practice going on across the country.

Further information

The organisations featured in this briefing are happy to be contacted for further information about their work. Contact details are included below:

Alder Hey Children's NHS FT: jason.dean@alderhey.nhs.uk
Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS FT: janine.taylor@gmmh.nhs.uk
Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust: rsykes2@nhs.net
Manchester Health and Care Commissioning: claire.yarwood2@nhs.net
Mersey Care NHS FT: gayle.wells@merseycare.nhs.uk
St Helens CCG: julie.ashurst@sthelensccg.nhs.uk
Wigan Borough CCG: dale.higginson@wiganboroughccg.nhs.uk
Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS FT: andrew.budory@wwl.nhs.uk